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Navajo Nation Fights to Retain Head Start Program

Window Rock, Ariz. — President Shelly has a meeting set up with Director Sanchez-Fuentes in Washington D.C. on Friday, September 23, to discuss a solution to issues the Navajo Head Start program is facing.

President Shelly will ensure that the issues the Navajo Nation Head Start program is facing will be addressed and will advocate for a higher grant award and the continuation of direct services for the children and our communities.

A top priority of the Shelly-Jim administration is creating a successful educational system, which must begin with the youngest of our people.

"I will do my best to advocate for students and staff throughout this school year," said President Shelly. "This means meeting with federal officials for nation to nation discussions to ensure direct services to our children and communities are not affected.

This week, a monitoring team from the Federal Office of Head Start is visiting the Navajo Nation to review deficiencies and areas of non-compliance.

The two critical issues facing the Navajo Head Start program are the significant reduction of base funding levels for FY 2012 and on-going monitoring issues dating back from an April 2010 triennial federal review visit.

Maintaining direct services to students, parents, and the communities of Navajo Nation Head Start are a priority for the Shelly-Jim administration. Immediate action is taking place to correct deficiencies identified by the monitoring team.

Throughout the summer, OPVP staff and Vice President Rex Lee Jim have been assisting Navajo Head Start's management, in an effort to enhance the programs responsiveness to federal requests. The Navajo Head Start Task Force, created by the administration in mid July, has also mobilized several divisions to assist Navajo Head Start with addressing the critical issues facing the program. In addition the Navajo Nation requested for negotiations and technical assistance about the significant reduction of base grant funds from the federal government, but has not received an adequate response.

The program has been struggling since 2006. The current administration accepts the challenge and is ready to rebuild the Head Start program to the level the Navajo children and families deserve.

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